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Whist Things

By
Frederic
E.
Moyer

WHIST THINGS

OLD AND NEW

BY

FREDERIC E. MOYER

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It is not expected that the system presented will be either adopted or approved, but it is hoped that deductions can be made that will add to the science of the game.

TABLE OF LEADS

Cards at Head of Suit	Number of Cards in Suit		
	4	5	6 or more
A K Q J	K J	Q A	Q K
A K Q	K Q	Q A	Q K
A K	K A	A K	A K
A Q J	A Q	A J	A J
A Q	4th	4th	A 4th
A	4th	A 4th	A 4th
K Q	K 4th	Q 4th	Q 4th
Q J T	T Q	T J	T J

From all other combinations lead fourth best.

GENERAL RULES
LEADS

ACE

Ace shows a suit of five or more, unless followed by the Queen, then only four and the presence of the Jack; when followed by King no Queen can be in leader's hand; when followed by Jack, shows a suit of five or more, and the presence of the Queen. When followed by any card lower than the Jack, shows at least a five-card suit, unless the fall of the cards indicates that the second lead is not a fourth best; it then shows a suit of only two, known as the "Fisher Ames Lead," and informs partner that the leader is ready to trump the suit and is willing to be forced.

Ace to Ten and Ace to Deuce are always "Fisher Ames Leads."

KING

King shows a suit of four, the presence of the Ace or Queen, or both. Winning a trick should be followed by lowest card of the suit for partner's Ace. When followed by Queen, marks Ace and one more in leader's hand; King then Ten, Queen and Jack are left in leader's hand.

There is but one Queen lead, which shows a suit of five or more, the presence of the King with or without the Ace. When led without the Ace and winning trick, should be followed with fourth best for partner's Ace. QUEEN

Jack is always an irregular card. JACK

Ten is led from bottom of sequence of Ten, Jack, Queen; followed by Queen shows a suit of four; followed by Jack shows a suit of five or more. TEN

Nine, when not led irregularly, is always a fourth best card. Combinations from which the Nine is led are as follows: NINE

Ace, Queen, Ten, Nine.

Ace, Jack, Ten, Nine.

King, Jack, Ten, Nine.

The two former show a suit of exactly four; the latter, four or more. These suits

should be opened seldom, for the reason that they are more valuable to be led up to than to be led from. When holding a Major Tennace suit (other suits being weak), and four trumps, open the hand with an irregular lead.

OTHER SUITS

All other suits should be opened fourth best.

Irregular Leads

Irregular leads, sometimes termed "top of nothing" or "supporting card" leads, are made from hands weak in plain suits and inferentially show strength in trumps (strength is four or more; it is the writer's opinion trumps should always be led from six). These leads should usually be made with the highest card of the shortest plain suit, generally an Eight, Nine, Ten or Jack, sometimes Queen, if only two of the latter suit are held. If you win the trick with an irregular lead it is usually safe to place strength of the suit in partner's hand, and if you have another card of the suit with which

to put partner in and sufficient strength to draw all the trumps, it should be done in order to bring in the suit, which being your short one is likely to be partner's long suit. If adversaries take the trick and you win adversaries' lead, and partner has not called for trumps, you should continue the short suit first opened. While you started to play a long suit game by informing partner of strength in trumps, you are paving the way to trump a plain suit, and should a short suit develop in partner's hand, you make trumps separately—a good way to make a high score when neither you nor partner has a long suit to bring in. For leads to be regular:

Seven means the Eight, Nine or Ten in leader's hand;

Eight means the Nine or Ten in leader's hand;

Nine means the Ten in leader's hand;

Ten means the Jack and Queen in leader's hand;

Jack is always irregular;

Queen means the King in leader's hand.

FORCED LEADS

Forced leads are made late in the hand. From three-card suits, headed by Ace, King or Queen, lead low; headed by Jack, Ten or Nine, lead high. When holding Queen, Jack and one small, lead Queen.

Irregular Leads that Do Not Show Strength in Trumps

A and B are partners. A opens with an irregular card showing strength in trumps, B recognizes it, but his hand is weak both in plain suits and trumps, and an effort to draw them to bring in plain suits is useless; he is therefore justified in endeavoring to establish a cross-ruff by leading his shortest suit when in, provided he is sure that A knows his (A's) opening card was recognized, because if B did not recognize it and leads an irregular card, A would be justified in having at least two rounds of trumps. There can be no misunderstanding if it is mutually agreed upon to lead trumps when both hands are strong in them; nor can there be a misunderstanding as to B's irregular card

When A opens with a Jack;

When A opens with a Nine, and the Ten falls;

When A opens with a Ten, and the Jack or Queen falls;

When A opens with a Queen, and the King falls.

Irregular Opening of Long Plain Suit

When you hold a long plain suit without command or cards of re-entry in other suits, and four trumps, open the long suit irregularly, but with a card that will give a fair chance of it being recognized by partner as irregular and at the same time bring out high cards. The lead not only conveys information of trump strength to partner, but will do much toward establishing the suit. If partner is strong in trumps, the chances are very good for you to make small cards in the plain suit. This often applies when holding five small trumps as well as four, for if you open trumps and find partner weak in them, and are then forced, there is not much chance of making any of your plain suit. On the other hand, if partner is strong in

trumps, two or three rounds may exhaust the adversaries; if you are then in and your suit was not cleared on the first round, the second should ordinarily do so, and the rest of the plain suit will be made. The writer believes that you are taking less chances by the irregular opening, particularly so when you have no cards of re-entry, and not sufficient trump strength to draw them all and still hold one or more long trumps.

Thirteenth Card

The thirteenth card of a suit should never be led if holding four trumps, but it is good play if fourth hand has shown strength in trumps; there are then two things for third hand to consider, either a high trump or none should be played. The thirteener may be played at other times to throw the lead.

Four Trumps and Three Cards of Each Plain Suit

The consensus of opinion favors the lead of the lowest trump when holding four, and three cards of each plain suit. After the first or second round the chances are that

you will know whether it is wise to continue: if the strength is against you, either you or your partner may be able to force the strong hand; after the strong hand has been forced, the situation may warrant you to continue the trump lead; it is especially good play, either winning or losing the trick, if a trump is sure to be drawn from both adversaries, leaving you with the long trump.

TRUMPS

Trumps should always be opened fourth best, except when holding three honors or more than six (honors are A., K., Q., J.), or King, Queen, Ten and others, then lead as in plain suits. The fourth best lead does not apply when trying to stop a cross-ruff; then Ace should always be led if in the hand; if not, it is then good play to lead low from three in order to be in command on the third round. If partner leads trumps to stop a cross-ruff, and you hold Ace, Queen, you should not finesse, but play Ace, thereby making sure of two rounds of trumps immediately.

TRUMP CALL

Trump call is made by the play of an unnecessarily high card followed by a lower one, or the discard of a card higher than a Seven of a suit that has not been shown.

A call is sometimes made in this manner: Suppose Ace is led, second hand plays Nine, the suit is continued, second hand plays King, fourth hand discards, second hand is now in the lead and plays Deuce of the same suit; the call is completed and gives an opportunity for making a small trump before they are opened. The same play may be made by reversing second and fourth hands.

A call may also be made as follows: A and B are partners; B is fourth hand and wins trick with Jack, and returns Ten of the same suit through the opening hand. B either wants a supporting card in trumps led or desires to finesse to partner's lead.

To refuse to trump a trick positively against you, is the loudest call for trumps that can be made.

In case an honor trump is turned, irregular leads are made by some players as a call

for trumps through the honor. This system, however, has been abandoned by a large number of players.

Trump Leads in Response to Call

If holding more than three, lead fourth best, the highest of three, the higher or two, or a singleton, except when holding Ace always lead it, then the higher of two remaining, or fourth best if holding four or more.

TRUMP ECHO

Some players echo to show four, some three or more, i. e., the play of an unnecessarily high card followed by a lower one. The writer believes that the echo to show exactly three trumps is the better whist. If partner leads high trumps, you hold Ten, Six, Deuce, play Six then Deuce; if low card is led, holding Ace, King, one small, play Ace, then King; holding Ace, King, two small, play King, then Ace; in short, holding two or four, play them up, holding three play them down.

The opportunity for the three trump echo

not only presents itself oftener than for four, but personal experience and the opinions of advanced players prove it to be decidedly advantageous. If partner knows that you echo to show exactly three and no more, the sting of false carding is reduced to a minimum. If with four trumps on partner's leads of high cards you play them up, the times when he will not be able to tell by inference whether you have two or four will be rare.

Refusing to Trump a Doubtful Trick

To refuse to trump a doubtful trick, shows four trumps or two honors among three. There is, however, an exception to this rule, that is, when the fall of the cards indicates that partner has the winning card or none.

Echo in Plain Suit

If partner leads trumps and adversaries win trick, an echo on adversaries' suit shows four trumps.

The play of intermediate, high, low, i. e., 6, 8, 4, at any time in a plain suit shows four trumps.

Showing Four Trumps in Plain Suit

When playing fourth hand, holding four trumps, and you begin to play intermediate, high, low, and partner completes a call on second round, instead of playing the high card on this round, play low; in other words, in response to partner's call you echo immediately, showing four trumps.

To show number of trumps when trumping plain suits, the following should be observed:

Showing Number of Trumps When Trumping Plain Suits

Holding four, first trump with third best, then fourth.

Holding five, first trump with fourth, then third, then fifth. (Some players prefer to trump first with third, then fourth, claiming that to show four trumps in two rounds is more valuable than to wait three rounds to give the information showing five.)

Holding six, first trump with fourth, then fifth, then sixth.

If a player trumps the initial lead, then opens a four-card suit, he originally held five trumps.

Losing Trump

To lead the losing trump when eleven have been played, you must be sure that either you or your partner can get in, whatever is led.

Show Your Suit, Keep Partner in Lead When Trumps Have Been Called or Led

If partner leads low trump and you win the trick, if holding commanding cards, show your suit before returning trump. If you hold a singleton trump, show your suit, then lead low card, endeavoring to put partner in, that he may continue to draw the trumps.

Great Suit—Card of Re-Entry

If you hold a great suit and fear it will be trumped on the second round, it is sometimes good play for your second lead to be from another suit in which you have a card of re-entry. By so doing you practically say to partner: "I have shown you my best suit and one in which I have a re-entry, now,

then, if you have trump strength, go ahead and draw them."

If partner shows a great suit, and you hold strength in trumps, it is your duty to call for them; but before he leads them he should, if possible, show a card of re-entry, i. e., if he holds Ace, King of another suit, he should lead King, then respond to trump call.

Partner's Great Suit

When after two leads of trumps you find all the strength massed in one hand, it is then best to force, try to compel the strong hand to lead up to you.

Force Strong Trump Hand

Subtract the face value of the fourth best card from the number eleven and the remainder will correspond to the number of cards higher than that fourth best card against you. Example: If an Eight is led from Ace, Jack, Nine, Eight, eight from eleven leaving three, if King, Queen, Ten are held in one hand, the Ten if played will win the trick.

Rule of Eleven

Second Hand

"Second hand low" is an old-time expression, but does not apply to any card that may be led. King or Queen led, cover with Ace; holding King and one small, to Queen led, play King, because if the Ace is third hand it will be finessed and lose in any event; if Ace is in partner's hand, the King makes and the suit may be cleared for him.

Jack led, never cover unless you hold two honors of equal value above it. Any small card led, if holding two high cards in sequence and one small, cover; but if holding two high cards and more than one small, play low; the suit may be cleared and you may bring it in instead of the hand that opened it.

Holding a Fourchette, the cards immediately higher and lower than the one led, cover; the Nine, Jack is the Fourchette over the Ten.

A good rule to follow in any position: If weak in trumps, play a forward game; if strong in trumps play a backward game. (Strength is four or more.) The Rule of

Eleven should always be kept in mind in any position.

Third Hand

Third hand will always play highest card to low card led, except when holding Ace, Queen (Major Tennace) and one or two small, when you are privileged to finesse; if Queen wins, the Ace or trumps should be returned immediately. If holding Ace and Queen only, play Ace, and return Queen.

To partner's lead of Ace, Jack, holding King and two small, play King on Jack, even though it be trumped. The short suit should always unblock to partner's long one, and when discarding get rid of command of partner's suit, retaining command of adversaries' suits.

It is sometimes good play to finesse partner's fourth best lead if you hold all the cards better than the card led against his hand, provided you can do so without blocking the suit. After he knows where the strength of the suit lies, his hand may justify an attempt to draw the trumps.

Fourth Hand

Fourth hand, of course, always tries to win the trick (unless making an underplay). If trick is won with an intermediate card and you hold Ace, it is usually bad play to lead it; by so doing you give up command of adversaries' suit. It often occurs that fourth hand wins a trick and then leads a card of the same suit up to weakness, or for the purpose of giving partner an opportunity to finesse if the best card is in that hand, but if the original player plays his best card the suit may be cleared for you, and the next time you or your partner are in, a lead of trumps may be justifiable. The fall of the cards might indicate, however, that the original fourth hand has no more of the suit, and by the play would invite a force.

Lead through Strength

Always lead through strength, never up to it, unless for the purpose of throwing the lead. If an irregular opening is made on your left and it is finessed on your right, the strength is usually found in the latter hand, rather than in partner's.

If it is necessary to open a Major Tennace Suit, with four, or five, open low. It is especially good play to open low with five when strong in trumps.

Opening Major Tennace Suit

When adversaries are leading trumps, it often becomes necessary to discard your own suit, in order to guard cards that may block their plain suits.

Discarding Strong Suit

If partner leads trumps and it is apparent that he is doing so for the purpose of bringing in your long suit, be wary of discarding from it.

Should the play of the hand devolp that trumps have all been drawn except that partner holds two, three, or four, it is usually good play to make all Aces and Kings or other winning cards in your hand when you are in, regardless of prescribed leads.

Don't Carry Home Aces and Kings

Always force a leading or calling adversary; do not change suits, for in nine cases out of ten you will force the strong trump hand.

Forcing

Singleton

The writer believes in the long suit game, and advises that a singleton be not led unless you hold at least five small trumps, and then only provided the hand is weak in plain suits.

Inviting Force

Opportunities for the following plays do not occur frequently, but are valuable at times to players of good judgment:

When void of a suit and trick is partner's, the discard of a 2, 3 or 4, indicates a willingness to be forced; the discard of a 5, 6, or 7, indicates the contrary.

Long Trump

Being left with the long trump and suit headed by Ace, King, lead low; when holding more than one, an extra lead of trumps is sometimes good play, the lead having made it impossible for adversaries to guard blocking cards.

Hand Endings

It is here that the odd tricks are frequently gained or lost. The diversity of hand endings makes it impossible to give an infallible

rule of play in any work, however large its scope. Memory at this stage of the game is the most essential requisite, and the best that can be done, is to play according to the story told by the cards already turned.

Underplay

Underplay is interesting when it works satisfactorily. Following are a few instances that occasionally occur: If you are second hand and hold Ace, Jack and one small, if strong in trumps, to King led play low; the leader will follow the King with a low card, expecting partner to win with Ace; you then play Jack. You now have won a trick in adversaries' suit and still hold command. The play can be made either second or fourth hand, and is especially advantageous if partner calls for trumps; the call is completed on the second round and you are in to respond.

The same play applies to Queen led, but it is more dangerous, the leader's partner being more likely to be short of the suit, and second play may be trumped.

When adversaries lead trumps from four and you hold four, it is sometimes good play to refuse to take the first and sometimes the second tricks, endeavoring to be in command on the last round. This, of course, only applies when you or your partner have a plain suit that can be brought in.

Before attempting any of these plays the fall of the cards and your hand should be well considered. Beginners are particularly liable to lose tricks by underplay.

FALSE CARDS

Considerable has been written discouraging the play of false cards, and may have been justifiable when writing of certain systems of play that have been in vogue, but the game as now played, when every card is freighted with a fund of information, it seems that when plays can be made that will conceal the information from the player for whom it was intended, the situation warrants false cards, provided they will not mislead partner or otherwise harm his hand. When playing with adversaries who call

for trumps to be led through an honor turned by the irregular lead of a Jack or Queen, and you are either second or fourth hand holding Ace, King, I believe you are justified in covering with the Ace, thereby for the time being concealing the information for which the lead was intended.

The same applies to irregular leads made to show strength in trumps.

The play of false cards is not recommended to the novice, as it is difficult for an experienced player to play them and not lose tricks.

Correct Play

Barring exceptions noted, correct play is very important, otherwise partner may lose confidence in you, and good hands may turn out to be poor trick winners. Especial care should be given to opening leads. If you open a suit with Ace, from Ace, Jack, Ten, Five, Deuce, be sure you follow the Ace with the Five (fourth best); the Deuce on the second lead would show only two cards (Fisher Ames Lead) in that suit.

Discard

There can be no doubt that the simplest and most practicable discard for beginners is from weakest suits, that partner may judge from inference as to the strongest suit held.

The following discard, which embodies the Rotary System, may at first glance seem complicated, but the writer believes if practised will be found comparatively easy and decidedly effective:

If partner leads trumps from strength, your first discard shall be by the Rotary System; if partner leads trumps from weakness and you continue to draw them for him, his first discard shall also be by the Rotary System.

If adversaries lead trumps from strength, your first discard shall be made from strongest suit; if, however, your hand is such that to discard from strongest suit would be inadvisable, then a reverse discard shall be used, viz.: If Spades are trumps, and Diamonds have been shown, a reverse discard in clubs shows strength in Hearts.

When using this system you should not jump at the conclusion that partner's first discard is his strongest suit, especially if it is an intermediate card; it may be the beginning of a reverse discard.

To discard the best of a suit always shows you have command of that suit.

Explanation of the Rotary Discard. Arranging the suits alphabetically, they stand:

Clubs—Diamonds—Hearts—Spades.

The discard of a club shows strength in Diamonds. If Clubs are trumps the discard of a Spade also shows strength in Diamonds. The strong suit is the one next below the discard, always eliminating the trump.

WELL TO KNOW

Before you begin play, in a match or duplicate game, look into the faces of your adversaries and try to judge of their possible astuteness.

Intuition and judgment are always important. Science adds zest to the game.

If you have whist perception, practise will make you a good player.

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